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"Winston Lord: 'The United States Is Going to Stay on in Asia'." Remarks by assistant secretary of state Winston Lord during a press conference at the US embassy in **New Zealand** regarding the importance of Asia to US foreign policy. (940808)

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Text: *EPF104 08/08/94 WINSTON LORD: 'THE UNITED STATES IS GOING TO STAY ON IN ASIA' (Transcript: Wellington press conference on August 5) (5480) Wellington — There is virtually no chance that the United States will abandon its role as stabilizer in the Asia-Pacific region, according to Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord.

During a press conference at the U.S. Embassy August 5, Lord commented on a suggestion that China might supplant the United States as "protector" in the region. "Now this is not to be unfriendly to China — that isn't the point," Lord said. "What I'm trying to say is that the United States is going to stay on in Asia. We have maintained our force levels, our alliances."

"We, of course, don't want to stay around if people don't want us to stay around, but it is a common thread out here that everyone would like the United States to stay on in the region — as I believe we're considered a benign force out here — one for balance — one that provides some stability," Lord said. "So as long as we feel welcome, as long as we think it's in our national interests — which we do, we will remain out here as a security presence."

Following is the official transcript of the briefing: (begin official transcript) PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT THE EMBASSY AUDITORIUM ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 1994 AT 3:00 PM WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC WINSTON LORD LORD: Thank you all for coming. Let me make a few opening remarks and then I'll be glad to take your questions. In brief, I have had a terrific trip. There is still some more to go in Auckland. But beginning in Christchurch where I had a briefing — in the Antarctica program and right through today, it has been extremely productive and I must say, on a personal level, very pleasant, both aesthetically — this beautiful country — and the **New Zealand** friendship that I have encountered every step of the way. I would like to begin by thanking the prime minister and the deputy prime minister — the foreign minister — and others for their, not only warm hospitality, but the amount of time they have given me personally to discuss a very important, and I must say, very positive bilateral relationship with all the global and regional dimensions that go along with it.

I've had a very full schedule, thanks not only to the generosity of my **New Zealand** hosts but to our new and very dynamic ambassador, Ambassador Beeman, sitting next to me, who has already, I believe, and you can attest to this more than I can, had a very positive impact here and certainly has formed many instant friendships and professional relationships in his brief stay here along with his outstanding wife Linda.

So therefore in addition to seeing the prime minister and the deputy prime minister, not only in meetings but also at a working — or I should say, was more fun than working, but it was both — dinner. I have seen the defense minister and the trade minister and the chief of the general staff and many other high-level foreign and defense officials. The treasury secretary I have seen, and will be seeing business people, as well as journalists. I saw Ms. Clarke, head of the opposition and other members of Parliament from various parties. I hope I haven't left anybody out because it's been a very full and very enlightening schedule.

I am going on shortly to Auckland for two important events. Essentially, one, a meeting with some **New Zealand** and American business people tonight to learn more about, and try to promote, American and **New Zealand** economic relations. A good part of our discussions here have been political and security, but we have also talked a great deal about economics. And of course most importantly of all, I am looking forward to seeing the All Blacks complete a three-win streak against the Springboks. Which means I never get to go to South Africa, I guess. But in any event, seriously, I'm a great sports fan and I know that rugby here is an extremely important event. And I am honored to go with the deputy prime minister who is very upset that he has to accompany me to the rugby game instead of being able to be at his national conference, but he does have to sacrifice for his country.

Our agenda, I think, should be clear to all. We have a very wide-ranging relationship with **New Zealand**. We reflected that in a recent change in policy so that we could carry on a dialogue in many areas of cooperation on a much more authoritative, visible and productive level. That process has begun with the recent visit of Admiral Larson of CINCPAC. The deputy prime minister has been to Washington on several occasions for meetings with his counterparts. I am coming here in a somewhat more modest level but certainly my first visit here is important to me and I hope has been useful to my hosts. And we look forward to many other high-level visits in the coming months and years to cement this relationship further, and indeed not only to further our cooperation where we agree, but to work on those problems where we still have some residual differences. I know you will be asking questions so I will get it right up front; we've talked about defense issues and where we might go from here as well as many other issues.

If you look at the global level, Uruguay Round, tremendous cooperation, our mutual desire to open up the world's trading system, and I might add that in the course of that, some rather modest, but I know particularly from the **New Zealand** standpoint, nevertheless significant problems have been eased with respect to American subsidies and so on. Also on a global level, there's very few nations, particularly when you look at the per capita situation, who contribute more to United Nations peacekeeping than **New Zealand** — their past efforts in Somalia and Cambodia and elsewhere but of course now, and most urgently, the dispatch of a company to Bosnia. We are cooperating with them in these peacekeeping activities, a very important dimension of international security.

Then on the regional level, we work closely together on APEC, the most promising regional economic organization for promoting trade and investment liberalization.

I have just come from Bangkok where we have launched, together with some 16 other nations, the ASEAN Regional Forum, where you have, for the first time, China, Russia, and Vietnam joining Australia and **New Zealand** and ourselves, Japan and Korea and ASEAN in regional security dialogues.

So again, on the regional level, very good cooperation with our friends here in **New Zealand**.

Then bilaterally, our trade and investment are going up even as **New Zealand's** economy shows very promising growth indeed, and I have been impressed with the dynamism of that economy. We cooperate on many other areas. We consult closely whether it's the U.N. or in Korea,... Cambodia and many other issues of common interest. And I might add we both have an interest in the South Pacific.

I have just come from Brisbane where I was at the South Pacific Forum where **New Zealand** plays such a strong role in promoting **ties** with the Island nations of this area. So this is one other agenda item that we have and will continue to pursue in our mutual interest and that gets us into the environment and many other areas where we have taken steps we believe that are in the global interest, certainly in our known national interest, that we believe would benefit the Island states out here as well as **New Zealand** and Australia: namely the Comprehensive Test Ban, a nuclear testing moratorium, a global climate change — support for that, and a recent Coral Reef initiative.

I might add taking our tactical weapons off ships — a whole series of moves that we think reflect the new post-Cold War agenda. So let me end up where I began; this has been a very fruitful visit. I promise definitely to come back both for professional reasons, and I want to make up for the skiing I missed in Christchurch. Thank you very much.

Q: Mr. Lord, do you think that time is going to be the only way that the current impasse still remains on the nuclear policy? Is that going to be the only heal that will breach that final rift in our relationship?

LORD: Frankly, I would like to try to eradicate the word impasse. I just think that... I'll be very honest, we have so many positive things — we've changed our policy in contacts — that I do think a preoccupation with residual differences doesn't really reflect the positive nature of our relationship.

Of course we have some continuing differences as I've mentioned yesterday, and which has been reported. I would like to think the increased levels and intensity of our exchanges and other promotion of cooperative activities will help to bring about changes in both our countries that allow us to move forward on the remaining problems. But we have a certain sense of urgency as well. I don't think we should be complacent about making changes. So I will certainly go back, as well as our **New Zealand** friends as a result of this trip, and see how we can continue to work at these problems with a sense of realism, but also with a sense of our shared interests and shared perspectives.

Q: What recommendations would you be taking back to your office in Washington regarding the future of **New Zealand's** relationship? I mean has anything changed? Do you want to move things forward? LORD: Well, we are going to move forward in many areas that I've mentioned. I just ticked off the global, regional, bilateral areas that we can work on, and I must say we have had very intensive discussions on all of those fronts. So there are a lot of areas like that we will work on but I don't have anything really specific to lay out at this time.

Q: Would you be noting with interest the proposed visit later this year or early next year of a British navy vessel?

LORD: Yes, we will be noting with interest. Q: Does that set any possible precedent for the U.S.? LORD: Well, we have, as you know, a couple of problems with respect to ship visits. Both the Neither Confirm Nor Deny policy and there is the nuclear propulsion problem — on that one I might point out that roughly 40 percent of our combatant ships are nuclear propelled and we just can't and don't wish to divide our Navy. So we have problems that everyone is familiar with and so our situation is a little different than the British.

Q: You talk about the post-war era, whatever the Cold War era. Isn't your policy of Neither Confirm Nor Deny from that era and isn't it time that you had a rethink about that?

LORD: Obviously, if we thought it was anachronistic we would have changed it.

Q: But it hasn't changed in how many years? LORD: It has been a long-standing policy. You're right, it hasn't changed in a lot of years.

Q: You don't think the world has changed in the meantime? LORD: I think the world has changed and I have indicated at the outset all the ways in which we have helped to change it, including in the nuclear area. We've made many steps in the nuclear area — again, in our self-interest and in a global interest — that we also think should be of interest to the nations of this region.

Q: Have you had any sense of the depth of the anti-nuclear sentiment in **New Zealand** during your brief visit?

LORD: Frankly no, except second hand. I mean it has been relayed to us. Various people have different perspectives on this and they try to give me a sense of the political context. I do want to make very clear we never confuse anti-nuclear with anti-American and reasonable people can have differences. We, of course, have our view on this and what is required. But I have not frankly encountered much anti-nuclear sentiment but I have not been out there but mostly in conference rooms and hearing the second-hand impressions of others.

Q: Mr. Lord, some people might say that there is a danger of anti-nuclearism and anti-Americanism being confused if the United States continues to adopt a policy towards **New Zealand** that does not accept the anti-nuclear policy that is a democratic one and supported by all main parties in **New Zealand**.

LORD: Well first of all, **New Zealand** has a right to pursue any policy it wishes, as does the United States. Secondly, I've tried — so far without notable success — to point out all the positive aspects of our relationship which somehow people forget in focussing on one issue which we think is a distortion.

I will repeat again, in the nuclear area, the United States has greatly reduced its nuclear arsenals, strongly promoted arms-control negotiations, not only with the former Soviet Union, but in a whole area of non-proliferation around the world. And even as we speak today, we are opening up talks again with North Korea on the nuclear question. Or whether it's the Ukraine or whatever it is, we are pressing very hard to lower the levels of nuclear weapons and to prevent others from acquiring nuclear weapons.

There is no other nation in the world that has done more of an anti-nuclear nature, if you want to use that phrase in that sense — and let's not have that out of context — but in that sense, than in the United States. We stopped testing. We urge others to stop testing. We proposed a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We've taken our tactical nuclear weapons off our ships. If that isn't movement in the nuclear area, I'm at a loss to describe what is movement.

Q: It's movement, but — with respect — the distortion is there because the United States maintains this attitude towards **New Zealand**. As I understand it the United States still wants **New Zealand** to change its anti-nuclear legislation, otherwise it will not restore full allied status. Is that correct?

LORD: Our attitude towards **New Zealand** is one of great friendship and much positive cooperation and this has also been reflected — in our own self-interest as well as out of friendship and cooperation — in our recent change in policy which brings me to **New Zealand** on the heels of Admiral Larson's trip and as a forerunner to other high-level visits in both directions.

Q: What will it take to bring **New Zealand** back into full allied status? LORD: We'll continue our discussions on that. I think the issues are well known. I don't think it is useful to get into specifics, at least in this forum.

Q: Is a U.S. ship visit at all possible as long as **New Zealand's** anti-nuclear legislation is in place?

LORD: It's very difficult, for reasons I have mentioned. I think the issues, again, are well known. And as this issue is going on there are plenty of others we haven't talked about but I don't know what to add to the answers I have already given.

Q: Mr. Lord, with America's strong support for the moratorium on nuclear testing leading to the renegotiation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty next year, what would be the United States' attitude if France resumes nuclear testing as expected with a possible change of presidency next year?

LORD: Well, we would very much regret that. We've made that clear on a most-favored-nation basis, if you will. We've told the Chinese we have not appreciated their tests. We would say the same about the French or anyone else who tests. We believe, as we head toward the Non-Proliferation Treaty review and as we try to negotiate a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, that we would like the moratorium to be fully observed. So we would regret that.

Q: Did Mr. Bolger make any request to visit the White House? LORD: I don't think it's up to me to quote what Mr. Bolger said. I think you should ask him that. I think it's fair to say that it's hoped that this can be worked out at some point and I'm sure he would be interested in it, but I don't want to start quoting what he said on that but obviously this issue is up and about.

Q: Would a visit to the White House be dependent on **New Zealand** changing its anti-nuclear legislation?

LORD: I don't want to get into a checklist. We don't believe among friends that we should have conditions for visits, so I don't think it's a useful way to put the answer or the question.

Q: But with respect, there have been conditions on visits as the anti-nuclear legislation...

LORD: That's what you are saying; I'm not saying that. Q: But you talk about how positive this relationship is and yet you seem to be stalling over this visit that he obviously wants to...

LORD: We've just changed our policy on contacts. We did about 20 other things that I have mentioned including in the nuclear area. The president has got congressional elections, he's got health care, he's got many other things. There's a lot of friendly leaders around the world that he has not been able to see yet. He saw the prime minister twice. First in Seattle and then at the Normandy observations. He very much looks forward to seeing him in Indonesia in November. I know he values not only the personal relationship but the perspectives that the prime minister brings as someone who is a great leader in this part of the world. Indeed, for U.N. peacekeeping, you could say he's a great leader globally as well. So this is a very friendly, productive relationship. People read too much into who can get to see the president and at what time. It is very hard to schedule White House meetings with anybody. So I really don't think this issue should be blown out of proportion.

Q: Ambassador could you outline what the U.S. position is on the social contract... social clauses... the idea of attaching to the GATT agreement or some other international agreement, minimum wages?

LORD: A few years ago the United States — looking ahead at the trade agenda and what was already percolating in various countries — identified some questions that we thought that the GATT had to grapple with, and we talked about intellectual property rights, about financial services, about agriculture. And at the time some people thought we were a little bit out in front or raising contentious issues, etcetera. We did it because we knew if you talked about trade you had to talk about these areas not just tariffs, for example. We did it because we saw these issues looming up over the horizon. We did it because we wanted multilateral discussions and not just unilateral U.S. recipes. For the very same reasons we've raised the environment and — as you have referred to — the workers rights issue with respect to the WTO which comes into effect at the first of the year to take the place of the GATT.

We do this for the same reasons: to begin talking about it. We haven't prescribed any specific way of proceeding, we're just saying, as you look over the next few years at trade issues, you cannot avoid issues like the environment and workers rights. And we are just saying let us reason together to figure out how these might be handled. We have no particular answer on this.

Now, with respect to workers rights specifically, there has been one misperception which I would like to try to help lay to rest here. We are not, emphatically not, talking about wage levels. We are not talking about setting an international minimum wage. We are emphatically not being protectionist or not saying let's take away the most important comparative advantage that the developing countries have. We're talking about a different set of issues related to ILO standards and other dimensions whether it's child labor, or prison labor and so on. So I'm afraid the perception — and maybe it's our fault for not preparing the ground work sufficiently before the Marrakesh meeting when this first came up — has gained credence that we are trying somehow to introduce wage levels and hurt the competitive positions of developing countries. That is emphatically not what we are up to. What we are up to is as I described.

Q: Have you been able to set Mr. Bolger straight on that because it's very clear that the perception was that this was an attempt to propose a quasi-German wages on the minimum...on the developing world?

LORD: Again, I prefer to have the prime minister or any other **New Zealand** official express their own view, so I don't want to put words in his mouth. But I think it's fair to say that there should be a better understanding as a result of our discussions here. And, I might add, this issue came up in Bangkok a few days ago and other **New Zealand** officials were there.

Q: Mr. Lord, what future do you see in the region for organizations like PECC and PBEC given the tremendous momentum that APEC has got?

LORD: Well I think it has still a very important role. They involve the private sector and how we specifically relate these organizations to APEC still has to be worked out, but there is already close consultations. There is overlap sometimes in membership, and we believe that the private sector is the driving force out here. I mean one of the roles of APEC is to find ways in which governments can get out of the way of private businesses. They can get on with trade and investment and therefore anything which involves the private sector. And both of those organizations do... will continue to be very important I'm sure, but the exact relationship to an expanding APEC still has to be worked out.

Q: And the role of the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir's East Asian Economic Caucus...?

LORD: I've just been in Malaysia, by the way, before I came here, as well as Indonesia, and I made clear to them, as we have all along from the beginning of this administration, — that we look for better relations with Malaysia. I think we are making good progress in that front.

We have so many interests that on this particular proposal we don't seek any confrontation. We would like, and I think we've succeeded, through mutual efforts, to keep it rather low key to work out any different perceptions and different interests.

We have made it clear that we think APEC is the most promising organization for regional economic matters because it is inclusive, and we are reluctant to see a line drawn down the middle of the Pacific or anything which would exclude us. We have trouble defining a group discussing Asian-Pacific economic issues that wouldn't want to involve us. Now having said that, we remain open-minded, we want to keep this low key and we'll continue to have discussions with our ASEAN friends, including Malaysia, to see where we go from here.

Q: Mr. Lord, when in Indonesia did you express any U.S. view regarding the continuing occupation of East Timor by Indonesia, especially on human rights?

LORD: Without necessarily subscribing to the way you phrase the question, yes. The East Timor question did come up and we of course raised it as we usually do, in fact frequently and regularly do with the Indonesians. However, we also covered many other issues where we have positive relationships. Indonesia is the fourth-most-populated country in the world. It is a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement in a moderate fashion. It is a very important member of ASEAN as well as being an important nation in its own right and it has been a leader in diplomacy whether it's Cambodia or the South China Sea. It has been useful in peacekeeping. It has given us military access and we have growing economic **ties** with Indonesia. They are going to be the host of APEC this year.

So for all these reasons, I went to Indonesia. For all these reasons, it is an important partner. And in the context of these broadly positive relations that I have just sketched we of course raise problems as a friend and as one counseling Indonesia as best we can without any arrogance or presumption on what we think is in its best interest and our own best interest.

Q: What do you think is in Indonesia's best interest regarding occupation? LORD: I don't think it's useful for me to — I think it's contrary to our style for me to unilaterally pronounce what's in Indonesia's best interest in a forum like this.

Q: Just on the subject of North Korea, a Hoover scholar in the last couple of weeks made rather a stinging attack on the administration's security policy saying that the existence of North Korean nuclear weapons undermines the American security guarantee to Japan — the implication being that he saw China as supplanting the United States as the protector, as it were, in the Asia-Pacific region. I wonder from your perspective, and especially as a former ambassador, what your commentary would be on that?

LORD: On China being a security protector of the region? Q: Replacing the United States in the Western Pacific. LORD: There is about as much chance of that as of the All Blacks losing tomorrow, I think. Which means it's pretty remote, I think. Let me say the following. Even less chance, I don't want to be misunderstood. Let's correct that — there's even less chance.

Q: What's the U.S. view of that? LORD: The U.S. view is that we would like to see as much openness there as possible, as much accounting as possible, as much restraint as possible, as much development as possible. And so we conduct a frank discussion of these issues as we do with other countries around the world on problems that may or may not be similar. But, in the case of Indonesia, in the context of a very positive relationship with many other fronts.

Q: Until earlier this year there's a linkage in U.S. policy between human rights and trade status with China. Do you ever consider attaching that to Indonesia as well over the Timorese issue?

LORD: Well there is some connection certainly in our Congress which has made some moves that we frankly thought were not necessarily the best way to approach this issue, although nothing has changed. Again, we may have some final word on that still coming out of Washington.

Essentially, we are where we were before in terms of American policy toward Indonesia. We believe our present approach with Indonesia is the way to deal with this issue and we plan to continue it that way.

Q: There were reports in the Australian media last week that North Korea had made some overtures about the possibility of joining the ASEAN Regional Forum. Are you briefed on that and is there a United States response on that?

LORD: Well I'm not sure of any specific overtures that they have made. I've seen those reports but I've had no confirmation of that. It is true, however, at the ASEAN Regional Forum the question of who else might be a member did come up. For example, there is a very strong case for Cambodia to be an early member in my opinion. And the issue of North Korean membership came up. And I think the general view — including that of the United States — is that at some point they should be a member. We would like to see this nuclear question essentially resolved before they join. Others may have a different view, but the fact is that the very rationale of this grouping and the approach is to be inclusive. And that is why Russia, Vietnam, China as well as Laos and Papua New Guinea were added this year.

Even though we knew this would slow down the process because you introduce a new calculus — a new geometry if you will — when others come in like this and we've felt it was important to include potential antagonists — people who have had historical tensions — so as to prevent future conflict by direct talk, by conveying of intentions whether it's about military budgets or territorial claims, to try to ease misperceptions and reduce conflict in the future. Take advantage of the relatively positive environment in this region, not be complacent but to move out with these dialogues and over time do confidence-building measures to prevent a conflict in the future.

So if you're going to do that and bring other countries in, presumably North Korea would qualify at some point. We think it's premature right now. The most urgent thing is talks in Geneva and we hope, I might add, the resumption of dialogue between North and South Korea, because ultimately the fate of the peninsula has to be decided by the Korean people.

Now this is not to be unfriendly to China — that isn't the point. What I'm trying to say is that the United States is going to stay on in Asia. We have maintained our force levels, our alliances. Together with **New Zealand** and others we have very good regional security dialogues. We, of course, don't want to stay around if people don't want us to stay around, but it is a common thread out here that everyone would like the United States to stay on in the region — as I believe we're considered a benign force out here — one for balance — one that provides some stability. So I think all the countries in the region, and this was made clear in Bangkok a few days ago, would like us to stay on. So as long as we feel welcome, as long as we think it's in our national interests — which we do, we will remain out here as a security presence.

China has a very legitimate role in this region. We encouraged its entry into the ASEAN Regional Forum. We would hope it would form better and better relationships with its neighbors, but China would not seek to be a security guarantor out here right now and I don't think many other countries would see it in that role very frankly. So I think it's a rather strange hypothesis, although in all fairness I have to read the full article.

You led in by saying that, again I'm not quite sure what the thrust of the article is, but something about nuclear weapons in North Korea. When we get finished over the process of diplomacy, hopefully, at some point there will not be, if there are now nuclear weapons in North Korea. If there are some they will be rolled back under the North-South Denuclearization Agreement, but we are not sure that there are any there now at all. The intelligence is not firm on that front.

We have practiced patient diplomacy as part of our world-wide effort to stem the spread of nuclear weapons. So rather than in any way undermining our security presence out here I would argue that our patient diplomacy — which is universally supported, which got tremendous support in Bangkok — is strengthening our security role. Because security is not only defined by the presence of military forces and alliances, it's defined in positive terms, what can we do through diplomacy to make this a more secure region. And by being on the forefront and talking to North Koreans and trying to induce them to give up nuclear weapons, if that's their intention and to make a more stable North East Asia not to mention a more stable world, we think that is a very important reflection of our security role.

So whether it's our diplomacy, whether it's the unilateral steps we have taken that I listed before in another context — or whether it's the maintenance of our allies and our alliances and our security commitments and our force presence here — I would argue that our security role in this region is stronger than ever and more welcome than ever.

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